

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 L-03 DHA-02 ORM-02 PRS-01 SCA-01  
VO-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00  
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R 291640Z DEC 76  
FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1584  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON  
COMUSFORAZ  
USCINCEUR  
CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 0510

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PO  
SUBJ: FLA LEADER MAY SEEK POLITICAL ASYLUM

REF: PONTA DELGADA 462 (DTG 161540Z NOV 76)

1. FLA LEADER, JOSE ALMEIDA, CALLED AT THE CONSULATE ON DEC. 28 TO SAY HE IS CONVINCED THAT AN ORDER FOR HIS ARREST WILL BE ISSUED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND HE MIGHT SEEK POLITICAL ASYLUM TO AVOID ARREST. ALMEIDA SAID THE PRETEXT FOR HIS ARREST WILL BE HIS PUBLISHING THE SEPARATIST NEWSPAPER "MILHAFRE". HE CLAIMED THE NEWSPAPER IS INGENUOUS AND THE REAL REASON FOR AN ARREST ORDER WOULD BE THE FALSE HOPE THAT IN ELIMINATING HIM FROM THE SCENE THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT WOULD DISAPPEAR. HE SAID PERSONALLY HE WOULD NOT OBJECT TO BEING TAKEN PRISONER BUT HE MIGHT BE FORCED BY CIRCUMSTANCES TO SEEK POLITICAL ASYLUM INSTEAD. THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE EXPLAINED, ARE THAT IF HE WERE ARRESTED THERE MIGHT BE SOME DEATHS; A LIST OF TARGETS EXISTS. THE UNSPOKEN IMPLICATION WAS THAT FLA DREW UP THE LIST AND SOMEONE CONNECTED WITH FLA WOULD DO THE KILLING. ALMEIDA SAID HE WOULD SEEK POLITICAL  
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ASYLUM TO AVOID THESE KILLINGS. HE PREFERS ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE THERE ARE A MILLION AZOREANS THERE. HE CLAIMED HE WAS IN SOME PERSONAL DANGER. ALMEIDA STATED THAT HIS VISIT TO THE CONSULATE WAS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF FLA LEADERS HELD THE NIGHT BEFORE.

2. ALMEIDA HAS A VALID MULTIPLE INDEFINITE B-2 VISA.

3. COMMENT: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED SEVERAL TIMES THAT IT WILL PROSECUTE THE NEWSPAPER "MILHAFRE" WHICH ALMEIDA PUBLISHES. SO FAR THE LOCAL JUDICIAL POLICE HAVE MADE HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPTS TO CONFISCATE COPIES OF THE FIRST EDITIONS OF THE NEWSPAPER AND HAVE TAKEN STATEMENTS FROM ALMEIDA AND SEVERAL OTHERS. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE FOURTH EDITION OF THE "MILHAFRE" WILL BE PUBLISHED IN A FEW DAYS. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ADVISED LISBON TO IGNORE THE "MILHAFRE" AND LET IT DIE A NATURAL DEATH. THE GOP, OBVIOUSLY, HAS NOT TAKEN THAT ADVICE AND MANY HERE BELIEVE THE GOP HAS PROVIDED THE NEWSPAPER WITH CONSIDERABLE FREE PUBLICITY.

4. TO DATE FLA HAS NOT BEEN VERY VIOLENT. IT WAS PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE WEAK BOMBS SET OFF HERE (THERE WERE NO INJURIES), AND FLA MILITANTS ROUGHED UP OPPONENTS DURING THE "HOT" SUMMER OF '75. APPARENTLY THERE HAS BEEN A DELIBERATE POLICY OF FLA NOT TO EMPLOY VIOLENCE WHICH IS REPUGNANT TO AZOREANS. I DOUBT FLA WOULD RESORT TO VIOLENCE IF ALMEIDA WERE ARRESTED, BUT THE POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE COMPLETELY RULED OUT FOR TWO REASONS. ONE, RESPONSIBLE AZOREAN LEADERS NO LONGER HAVE ANY TIES WITH FLA. THOSE WHO REMAIN INVOLVED IN THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENT TEND TO BE EXTREMISTS AND SOME ARE VERY EMOTIONAL. SECONDLY, FLA MAY BELIEVE ITS BACK IS TO THE WALL. THE MOVEMENT HAS LITTLE ACTIVE POPULAR SUPPORT NOW AND HAS NOT PLAYED AN ACTIVE ROLE IN AZOREAN POLITICS FOR MANY MONTHS. THE "MILHAFRE" IS ITS ONLY SIGN OF LIFE. THE ELIMINATION OF THE NEWSPAPER AND ALMEIDA'S ARREST MIGHT BE AN IRREPARABLE LOSE OF PRESTIGE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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VIABILITY TO THE PRESENT ORGANIZATION. ITS MEMBERS MIGHT BELIEVE THEY MUST FIGHT FOR POLITICAL SURVIVAL, BUT EVEN SO IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE ANY AZOREAN WOULD RESORT TO ASSINATION. I BELIEVE FLA AND ALMEIDA ARE ATTEMPTING TO USE THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE TO PERSUADE THE USG TO GRANT ALMEIDA POLITICAL ASYLUM, THE ONLY TYPE OF RECOGNITION THEY THINK THEY MAY BE ABLE TO WIN FROM THE USG.  
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